

Death News Met With Disbelief

By HENRY McNULTY

Randy Kendall of Chester was in the Ice Cream Scene shop in the Hartford Civic Center Tuesday when he heard the news that Elvis Presley had died.

He got up, walked the few steps to the civic center ticket windows, took out his pocket-sized camera and photographed the large sign that said, in capital letters, ELVIS.

"Elvis was real important to me," he said, "and I just wanted to have this picture, kind of as a memento."

His friend, Joan Desaulniers of Somers, said, "Randy used to portray him in high school. Like at the teachers' convention, they'd put on a show, and Randy would be Elvis."

Kendall nodded in agreement. "He was real special," he said.

Word spread quickly through the civic center Tuesday afternoon after the announcement that Presley, scheduled to perform in the center's Coliseum on Sunday, had died.

"People keep asking whether they heard right," said Anna Vernali, who was answering the phone at the civic center information booth. "I tell them, 'Yes, you did.'"

Within an hour of the death announcement, the civic center's ticket information phone recording had been changed. "The Elvis Presley concert scheduled for Aug. 21 has been canceled," the woman's voice said, tersely.

Mrs. Marge Smith of East Hartford, whose sister stood

in line for six hours recently to get Elvis concert tickets, saw the news on TV. "I was shocked — positively shocked," Mrs. Smith said.

"I called about six people. My phone hasn't stopped ringing. Elvis is different — he's more than a Bing Crosby or a Sinatra. He's like one of the family."

Paul Bezanker, a Hartford record collector who edits an "oldies" fan magazine, was contemplative. "It's the end of an era, that's for sure," he said. "Elvis was always number one."

Bigger than the Beatles? "My wife and I were just talking about that," Bezanker said. "He was always on top. The Beatles never even challenged him. He had a few lean years, but he was always the greatest."

An hour and a half after he heard about the death, Bezanker was planning the next issue of his magazine, which he said "of course, will be an Elvis special, a memorial."

Some persons, however, were unaware that Presley had died.

"No! Elvis? Dead?" asked Milton Cohen of Wethersfield, who was told of the death in the civic center mall. "That's incredible."

"He started the rock era, without a doubt," said Cohen's son, Steven, who was looking at stereo equipment with his father and sons.

"I wish I could think of something profound to say," the senior Cohen said. "I don't know — it isn't like a president had died. Still, he was the birth of the music you hear today." He gestured towards a record store.

Terry DeFillippo of North Tarrytown, N.Y., was at a meeting of Buick dealers all afternoon and hadn't heard the news either. She also registered surprise.

"He is going to be missed by loads of people," she said, shaking her head. "I followed his career really closely, because he was in my age group. He was my peer, you might say."

"I've got people in here right now, browsing through the Elvis racks," said Roger Berube of Hartford's Belmont Records. "People are buying the big boxed sets. I've sold three in the past hour, since the announcement."

Berube said people called him to tell him the news, although he had already heard it on the radio. "One fellow was crying," he said. "And a lady wanted to buy a ticket to the Elvis concert that was supposed to be Sunday."

"She wanted it for a memorial."



Rock King Dies

Elvis Presley, the 42-year-old rock 'n' roll king, died Tuesday of respiratory failure at Baptist Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. Presley, a national legend before his 25th birthday, rocketed to fame and fortune in the 1950s and had the fastest selling albums in history. Presley is shown here as he performed on his television special Dec. 3, 1968 (UPI).

'Elvis' Influenced Today's Parents

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — There were a lot of dinner table debates that Sunday night in 1956. Would parents let their children watch a sneering, long-haired, swivel-hipped Mississippi country boy croon his suggestive rock 'n' roll on Ed Sullivan's television show?

In living rooms across the country today's adults, yesterday's youngsters, got their first look, albeit a discreet one, at the man who would change American life-styles and the nation's popular music.

Sullivan showed him only from the waist up, rocking around up there on the flickering tube. Most of the parents hated him — which made the kids love him all the more.

From the soles of his blue suede shoes to the tips of his rakish, hair-oiled sideburns, Elvis was the first shellburst in a revolution of American folkways.

From "Heartbreak Hotel" to "Love Me Tender," a million raptured bobby-soxers begged to just let them be his teddy bear; and a million boyfriends, jealous and admiring, imitated Elvis' look. They grew duck-tail haircuts and sported black leather jackets and tried to speak like the sons of Mississippi tenant farmers.

The changes were more

than superficial. What Elvis did — it was enough to say Elvis — was bring sexuality into the open. Maybe parents wondered about the lyrics, "Love me tender, love me true, never let me go, for my darling I love you . . ." but their children didn't need to be told. He took the raunchy back beat of the black blues and made them top 40 fare — with just enough white-wash to give them the patina of respectability.

Anyway, some parents said, he mumbled most of the time.

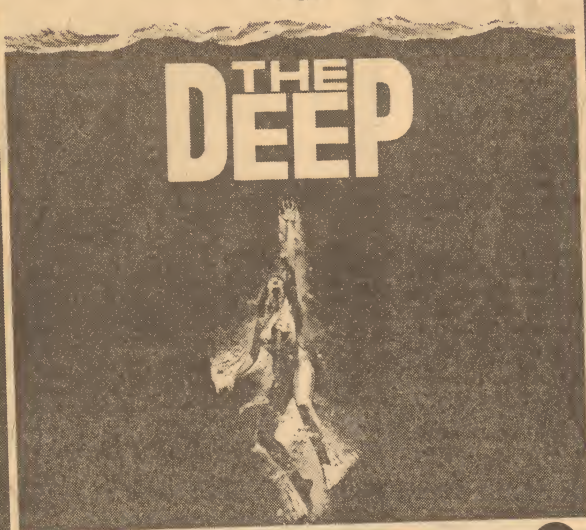
That first night, on the television, you couldn't tell he couldn't play the guitar very well. Who cared? That first night you couldn't tell he'd be overweight one day and a little snappish in his last concerts. Who cared? That first night you didn't have the slightest idea what a blue suede shoe looked like. Who cared?

The kids those parents worried about are today's parents.

"Oh, no," said a 33-year-old buyer for Bloomingdale's, the chic New York department store, when she heard the news. Then the woman, mother of a 2½-year old, broke down and cried.

Tuesday night in Memphis, Elvis died. A generation of people cared.

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